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RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0720

C O N F I D E N T I A L CANBERRA 001101

SENSITIVE
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DEPARTMENT FOR EAP/ANP

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/30/2018
TAGS: [MARR](#) [MCAP](#) [PREL](#) [AF](#) [AS](#)
SUBJECT: AUSTRALIA DELAYS FUNDING DECISION ON AFGHAN
NATIONAL ARMY EXPANSION

REF: STATE 97592

Classified By: Political Counselor James F. Cole for reasons 1.4(a) and
(d)

[¶1.](#) (U) This is an action request. Please see paragraph 4
below.

[¶2.](#) (C/NF) Australia has postponed until early 2009 a
decision on the U.S. request to provide US\$85 million per
year from 2010 to 2014 to fund the expansion of the Afghan
National Army (ANA). Jon Merrill, Director, Afghanistan
Section, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, indicated
the delay stems mainly from a limited budget and off-cycle
timing. Beyond the limited funds, however, the GOA is
estimating what additional requests might be made to support
Afghanistan under a new U.S. administration and how it might
want to prioritize funding allocations. Merrill reaffirmed
Australia's long-term commitment to Afghanistan, as well as
the importance of growing and training the ANA and noted this
is certainly within the scope of their priorities.

[¶3.](#) (C/NF) Merrill inquired about the contributions of other
countries with an eye to fair share participation, as Defence
Minister Fitzgibbon has often cited. Merrill indicated that
a letter request from Secretary Gates to Defence Minister
Fitzgibbon would provide additional support to deliberations
within the government on the funding request. Finally,
Merrill confirmed that they have sufficient information about
the funding mechanism for these contributions.

[¶4.](#) (C/NF) ACTION REQUESTED: Embassy solicits information on
other countries' contributions to ANA expansion, along with
authorization to share this information with Australia.
Embassy also flags for the Department's consideration the
suggestion at DFAT working levels that a letter from
Secretary Gates to Defence Minister Fitzgibbon may help
generate a positive response.

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